

Monday, 16 March 2009

CHINESE LANGUAGE BOOST

South Australian schools teaching Chinese will be able to tap into the expertise of the University of Adelaide's Confucius Institute through a new agreement, signed today.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith and University of Adelaide Vice Chancellor Professor James McWha today formalised the arrangement through a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Confucius Institute brings Chinese language teachers and cultural experts to Adelaide to work with schools and teachers across the Government, Independent and Catholic education sectors.

The Institute also runs courses to update Chinese language teachers on the latest information and techniques to keep students involved in their learning.

"Through this agreement, our young people will be able to continue to learn the contemporary language and culture of China," Dr Lomax-Smith says.

"That knowledge will help them prepare to engage in the global society and economy in which China is a major player.

"High quality Chinese language and cultural education is a significant investment in the future of our State and our long-standing relationship with China.

"Developing a deeper understanding of others is not just a matter of learning about a culture, but also engaging with their culture, which can be achieved through learning and using its language."

"This agreement will support both Chinese and non-Chinese background students to learn and maintain Chinese language skills.

"It will also stimulate more young people towards a fulfilling career teaching Chinese."

About 5960 students learn a Chinese language and culture in 50 State schools.

Students learning Modern Chinese already benefit from programs the Confucius Institute offers - such as calligraphy and school visits by visiting teachers from China.

Chinese is one of nine major non-indigenous languages offered in State schools and preschools. The others are Greek, German, French, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Nearly 9000 South Australians speak Mandarin Chinese at home. Chinese is the fourth most widely spoken language other than English in the State, with 0.6% of the South Australian community speaking the language.